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ABSTRACT

This document provides a decision tree to guide the thinking of the staff of New Zealand agencies developing national education and certification standards. It is intended to help them make decisions about moderation of assessment--a process of sampling assessments to ensure that they are consistent with the required standard. After an introduction, the document is structured around five steps, each of which asks a question of standards agencies. Step 1 asks, "What expectations do people have of the assessment process?" because these expectations help determine the extent to which it is appropriate to invest local and national resources to ensure that assessments are fair, valid, and consistent. Step 2 asks, "What activities are already in place to help ensure that assessments are fair, valid, and consistent?" Unit registration, accreditation, reaccreditation and external audits are discussed. Step 3 asks a key question: "Are expectations met without requiring external moderation?" If the answer to this question is Yes, there is no need to proceed further; if No, agencies will move to step 4. Step 4 asks, "What moderation arrangements need to be put in place to meet expectations?," suggesting that national standards agencies establish either one central national moderation system or a national moderation system of local networks. Step 5 asks, "Do arrangements now meet expectations?" If the answer is No, step 4 should be revised. The two appendices contain moderation criteria and a glossary. (CML)

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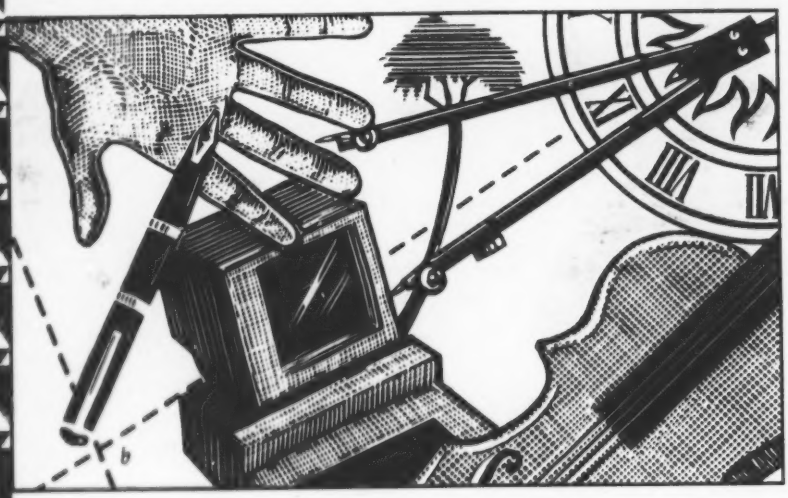
DEVELOPING A

QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

FOR NEW ZEALAND



MODERATION OF ASSESSMENT

An Introduction for National Standards Bodies

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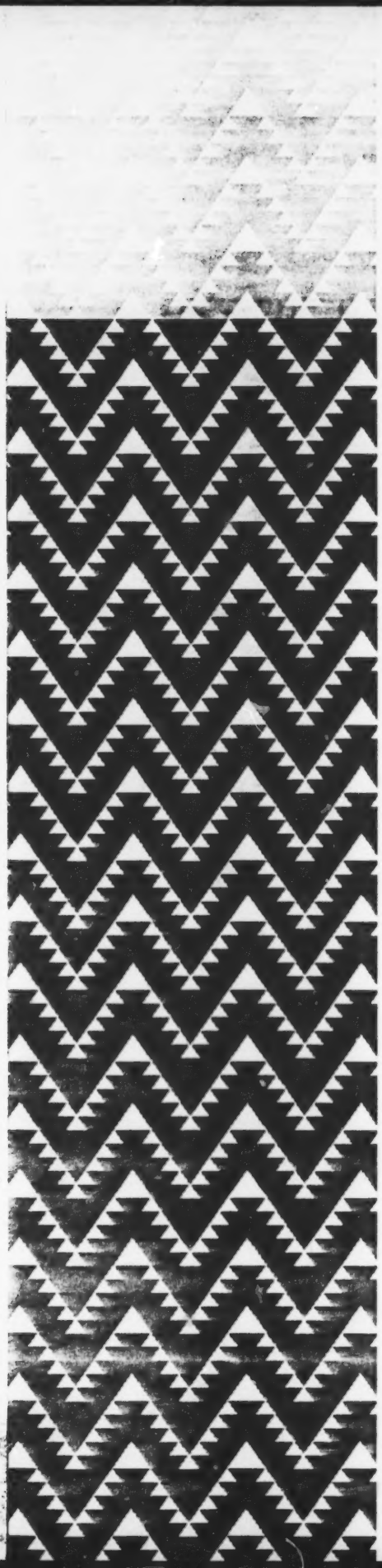

The New Zealand Qualifications Authority will promote improvement in the quality of education and training in New Zealand through the development and maintenance of a comprehensive, accessible and flexible National Qualifications Framework.

The Authority's main functions are to:

- coordinate all qualifications in post-compulsory education and training (from upper secondary to degree level) so they have a purpose and relationship to one another that the public and students can understand
- set and regularly review standards as they relate to qualifications
- ensure New Zealand qualifications are recognised overseas and overseas qualifications are recognised in New Zealand
- administer national examinations, both secondary and tertiary

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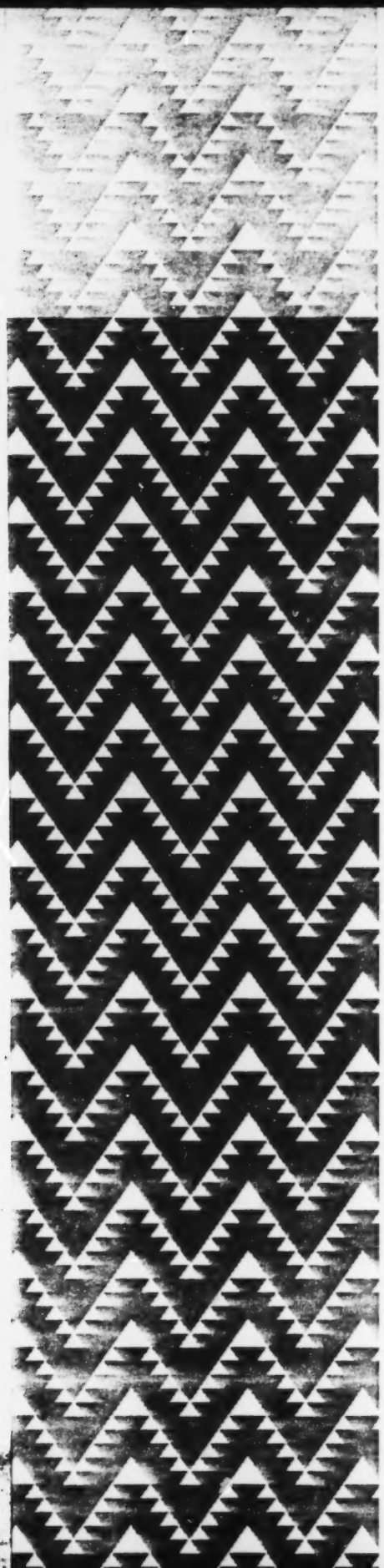
December 1992



FOREWORD

Holders and users of national qualifications must have confidence that different assessors throughout New Zealand have assessed to the same standards.

Moderation is a broad label that covers activities that help to ensure there is uniform interpretation and application of standards.

The main purpose of this booklet is to assist national standards bodies to make decisions about external moderation for their units and qualifications.

Decisions about external moderation options need to recognise that the success of the Qualifications Framework depends on co-operation, mutual respect, understanding and commitment on the part of all partners - users, providers and the Authority. Each must play its role in fostering the partnership.

Legislation gives tertiary institutions the freedom 'to teach and assess students in the manner they consider best promotes learning'. This is a freedom they practice within the need to maintain 'the highest ethical standards and the need to permit public scrutiny to ensure the maintenance of those standards' as well as the need for general accountability.

Legislation gives the Qualifications Authority responsibility for ensuring there are mechanisms in place to guarantee that assessment procedures are fair, equitable, consistent, and in keeping with the required standard.

The rights and responsibilities of tertiary institutions and the responsibility of the Authority require fine balance.

This booklet does not directly address funding implications. Funding is nonetheless a critical consideration when making decisions about moderation requirements. Costs will most often be borne by providers, and these will usually be passed on to candidates. The Authority has the responsibility to reject proposed external moderation systems that have undesirable resource implications for providers, candidates or Government.

INTRODUCTION: Setting the scene

Fair, valid and consistent assessment

The broad goal for all assessors is to produce assessments that are fair, valid and consistent. This requires:

- appropriate assessment activities, and
- accurate assessment decisions.

It is important to note that there are a number of related issues (such as providing candidates with fair re-assessment opportunities) which are not within the scope of this booklet.

The technical issues

A valid assessment activity is one which assesses what it sets out to assess, and not something else.

Another way of thinking about validity is that the assessment is 'fit for purpose' - it is an appropriate way to assess the specific learning outcomes that are under consideration.

An assessment activity will be valid if its results accurately represent achievements in the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that are to be assessed.

A reliable assessment gives results that are a consistent and accurate picture of what is measured. In other words, the results can be relied upon.

Variation

Any assessment includes a margin of error. Methods of assessment and applications of standards will vary. The challenge is to limit the variation to acceptable proportions.

A shoal of fish has been used as a way of explaining the issue. Note that the fish represent assessors, not learners.

> Individual fish might be to the left or right, high or low, forward or laggard, each following its own path, each with its own motive power. Yet the shoal as a whole can veer in one direction or another. There are apparent mechanisms at work within each individual which keep it close to its neighbour.
>
> Through these mechanisms, deviant fish are returned to the mainstream. The relationship between individuals adjusts constantly but the shoal remains within appropriate bounds and retains a constant, steady progression. Some variations are considered acceptable.[1]

[1] This illustration does not mean learners should not always be encouraged to excel by achieving beyond expectations.

Moderation

Wherever it occurs, moderation of assessment is usually carried out through sampling. This involves targetting selected, representative points to check out the quality of the whole.

As individual assessors move through the assessment process, the main function of moderation activities is to ensure that different applications of standards remain within acceptable limits. In other words, moderation ensures that assessors remain within the national shoal.

This booklet

To assist standards bodies to make decisions, this booklet has been structured in five steps. Each step asks a question:

Step 1	What expectations do people have of the assessment process?
Step 2	What activities are already in place to help ensure assessments are fair, valid and consistent?
Step 3	Are expectations met without requiring external moderation?
Step 4	If not, what moderation arrangements need to be put in place to meet expectations?
Step 5	Do arrangements now meet expectations?

Steps one and two are prerequisite questions that need to be answered before asking the key question at step three. Depending on that decision, standards bodies will stop at step three or continue to step five.

STEP 1

What expectations do people have of the assessment process?

The assessment process covers the whole business of collecting and interpreting evidence about what learners have achieved.

In step 1 the national standards body first identifies the people who will make use of reports on learners' achievements in the units under consideration. Many of these people will be represented on the standards body.

The standards body must then ask this question:

QUESTION

What expectations do the following have of the assessment process?

- learners?
- local users?
- national users?
- international users?
- the education community?
- the wider community?
- government?
- other specific interest groups?

These expectations will help to determine the extent to which it is appropriate to invest local and national resources (for example - finances, time and energy) into ensuring that assessments are fair, valid and consistent.

STEP 2

What activities are already in place to help ensure assessments are fair, valid and consistant?

Step 2 involves a brief exploration of the overall quality process.

Even without external moderation, there already are a number of activities that support assessors to operate within acceptable limits.

Unit registration

When the Authority registers units, it requires each unit to have clearly expressed performance criteria. Unit standards must be unambiguous if assessors are to produce fair assessments.

This is, of course, less easy to achieve in general education than in those career areas where skills are very specific.

Accreditation

Accredited providers are required to have quality management systems of *policies* and *procedures* that cover:

- the development and evaluation of teaching programmes;
- financial, administrative and physical resources;
- staff selection, appraisal and development;
- student entry;
- student guidance/support systems;
- practical/work-based components;
- assessment; and
- reporting.

To make sure that the systems are working, providers are also required to undertake on-going *evaluation* of their policies and procedures.

There are many ways in which the various accreditation requirements enable the production of assessments that are fair, valid and consistent, for example:

- policies on teaching staff will ensure there is an appropriate level of expertise on assessment practice;
- assessment procedures will ensure that internal assessments are within acceptable national limits. This will mean that providers and work-places will carry out internal moderation. [2]

[2] In addition to individual assessors, there are two further players in internal moderation:

candidates - they can assess themselves against the performance criteria, and compare self-assessments with their assessors' assessments. They can discuss any disagreements with the assessors. In doing so, they contribute to ensuring fair, valid and consistent assessment.

other assessors - where there are several working in the same field, they can also act as internal moderators by cross-checking each other's assessments.

Although internal moderation involves in-house arrangements, individuals from outside a provider or work-place can also be invited to participate.

Re-accreditation

At the time of re-accreditation, providers will be expected to report on such matters as:

- moderation and evaluation activities carried out during the period of accreditation;
- any changes in delivery that have been made as a result of the moderation and evaluation activities;
- any further changes which are being considered.

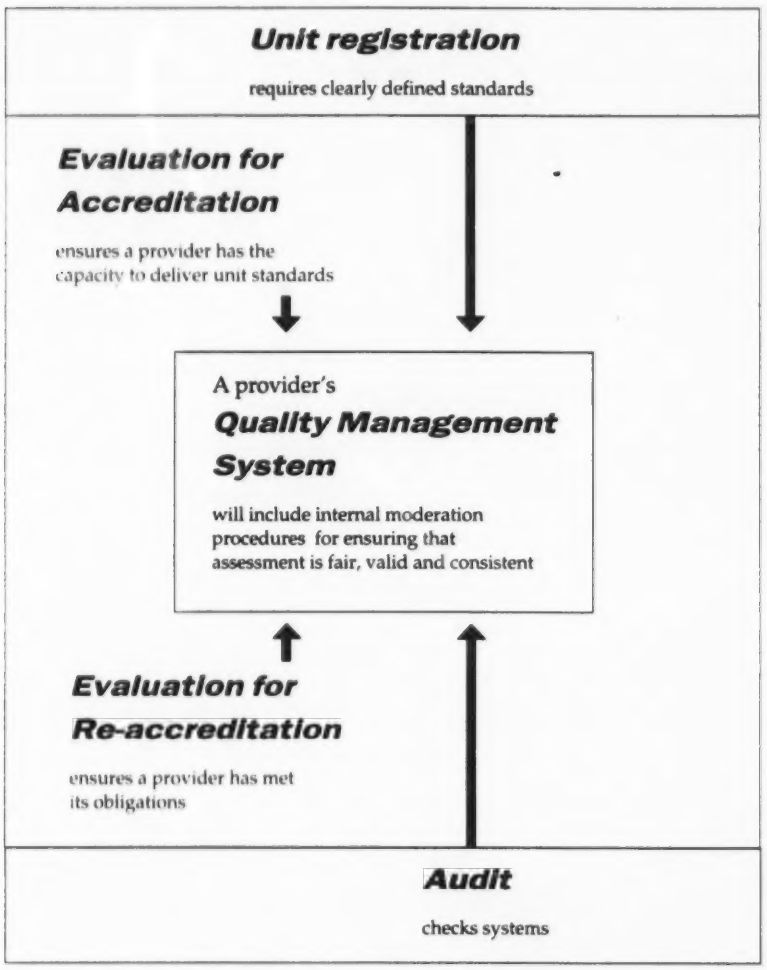
At the time of re-accreditation, external evaluations are carried out to ensure that providers have been meeting their obligations.

Audit

External audits can be used to check that quality management systems are in place and are operating as intended.

The linked quality process

The following diagram shows how the activities that have just been outlined form a linked quality process.


Unit registration
requires clearly defined standards
Evaluation for Accreditation
ensures a provider has the capacity to deliver unit standards
A provider's
Quality Management System
will include internal moderation procedures for ensuring that assessment is fair, valid and consistent
Evaluation for Re-accreditation
ensures a provider has met its obligations
Audit
checks systems

Is this enough to meet expectations?

STEP 3

Are expectations met without requiring external moderation?

In step 3 the national standards body asks a key question:

QUESTION

Can there be confidence that the expectations identified in step 1 can be achieved through:

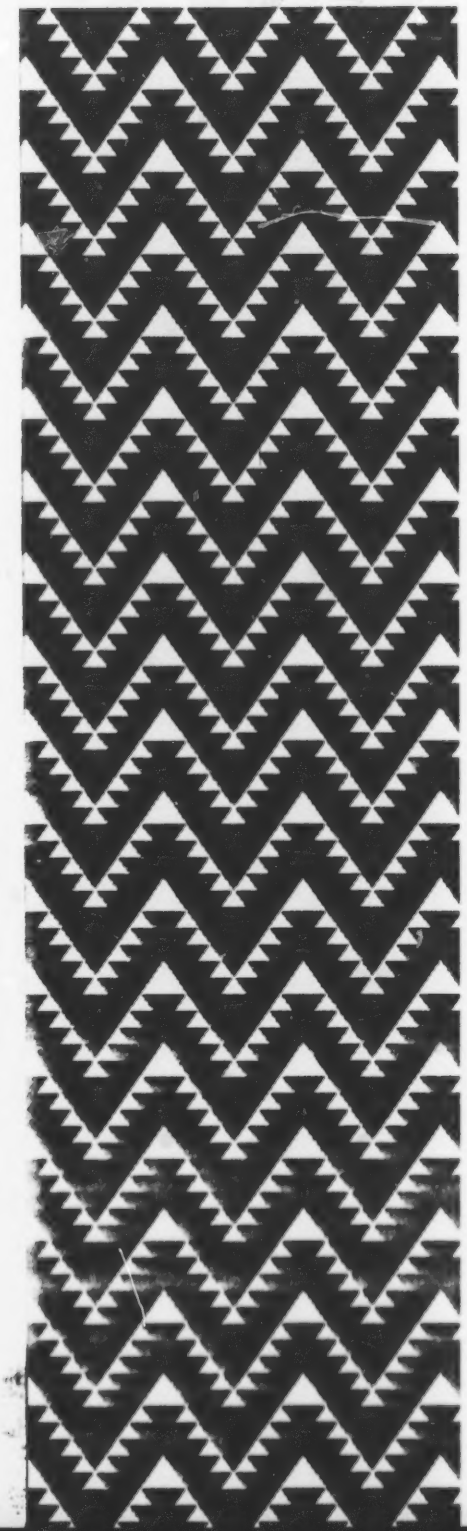
- unit standards with clear, unambiguous performance criteria,
- accreditation requirements,
- providers' internal moderation procedures for achieving fair, valid and consistent assessment,
- re-accreditation requirements and
- external audit?

If the answer is YES, there is no need to proceed. The activities in the quality process have the capacity to deliver the expectations defined in step 1 without needing to add an external moderation option.

If the answer is NO, then move on to step 4.

STEP 4

What moderation arrangements need to be put in place to meet expectations?



Step 4 is taken if external moderation is required. This step involves a national standards body adopting one of two options:

Either	option 1	a centrally established and directed national moderation system
Or	option 2	a national moderation system of local networks.

OPTION 1

In option 1 the national standards body and/or its agent designs a national moderation system. This system will be centrally established and directed.

The agent of a national standards body could, for example, be any one or a combination of the following:

- the Qualifications Authority,
- a national professional association,
- a national industry organisation,
- an individual provider or a consortium of providers,
- a private consultant.

The standards body will provide the designers with a brief of broad instructions. The brief might cover such matters as the function of the system, the preferred method of moderation, cost parameters, implementation arrangements, and so on.

Greater detail on these and other moderation matters is provided in an Authority publication titled *Designing a Moderation System*. The purpose of this booklet is to provide technical assistance to those given responsibility for designing moderation systems.

Unless individuals on a national standards body have some background in assessment and moderation practice, members should avoid confronting the complexities in that booklet. The design brief should be negotiated with the help of an expert who may or may not be the agent who will design the moderation system. Qualifications Authority staff are available to assist with this.

In all situations it is desirable that standards bodies advise the Authority of their intentions before the brief is completed.

When option 1 is adopted, at the time of unit registration the national standards body will submit to the Authority information on the design of the moderation system. The Authority reserves the right to reject this on the grounds of impracticality or cost, although earlier contact with the Authority, as suggested above, should make this unlikely.

At the time of accreditation, a provider will make a commitment to participate in the national moderation system.

OPTION 2

In option 2 the national standards body chooses broad moderation criteria.

When option 2 is adopted, the moderation criteria will be submitted to the Authority at the time of unit registration.

Unequivocal moderation criteria can be stated by using the formula that follows.

The standards body selects from the ten criteria provided and combines these into a statement. The statement will comprise one, two or three sentences. If necessary, the standards body can choose to tag further information.

An explanation of the criteria is provided in appendix one.

Sentence 1

1. *There will be external moderation arrangements which*

OPTIONAL: if necessary, select ONE of

2. *are locally based and*

3. *are regionally based and*

OPTIONAL: if necessary, select

4. *include user participation.*

Sentence 2

OPTIONAL: if necessary, select ONE of

5. *There will be a pre-planned programme for sampling*

6. *There will be a flexible programme for sampling*

OPTIONAL: if necessary, select ONE, TWO or THREE of

7. *the design of assessment activities*

8. *during assessment activities*

9. *assessment decisions.*

A standards body can add a third sentence which will enable effective sampling to occur.

Sentence 3

OPTIONAL: if necessary, add

10. Where a provider is accredited to offer multiple units in ____(a)____ at level/s ____(b)____ , in any one year assessments in ____(c)____ of these will be moderated.

Sentence three is completed by adding three items of information:

(a) the grouping of units, for example 'history' or 'fisheries';

(b) the relevant Framework level or levels, for example '2' or '1-3';

(c) the percentage of units to be sampled.

The following examples show how a moderation criteria statement can be developed using the formula. In example a. the standards body selected only two criteria whereas example b. is a full three sentence statement.

Example a:

There will be external moderation arrangements which include user participation.

Example b:

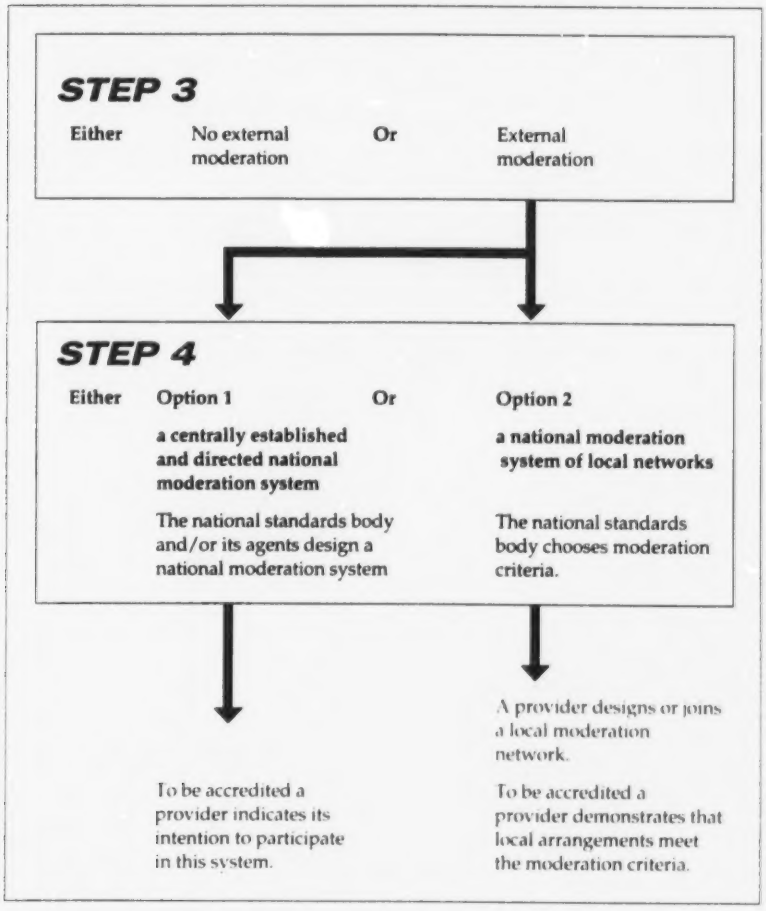
There will be external moderation arrangements which are locally based. There will be a flexible programme for sampling the design of assessment activities and assessment decisions. Where a provider is accredited to offer multiple units in history at levels 1-3, in any one year assessments in 33% of these will be moderated.

Again it is desirable that the standards body seeks advice on its intentions. Qualifications Authority staff are available to discuss with standards bodies the implications of the criteria they wish to select.

The criteria are broad statements that provide a basis for action. Individual providers will be required to take the criteria and design a suitable local moderation network or join or link to an already established network. The publication *Designing a Moderation System* provides technical assistance on how to do this.

At the time of accreditation, a provider will need to demonstrate that its moderation arrangements meet the criteria laid down by the national standards body and are fit for purpose.

Summary of the options


STEP 3
Either
No external moderation
Or
External moderation
STEP 4
Either
Option 1
Or
Option 2
a centrally established and directed national moderation system
a national moderation system of local networks
The national standards body and/or its agents design a national moderation system
The national standards body chooses moderation criteria.
A provider designs or joins a local moderation network.
To be accredited a provider indicates its intention to participate in this system.
To be accredited a provider demonstrates that local arrangements meet the moderation criteria.

Considerations

Before adopting one of the options, the following points should be considered carefully.

Moderation is no substitute for good assessment.

While moderation systems might have importance, they must not in any way constrain good learning.

Excessive external moderation requirements would be an inappropriate use of valuable resources. If the expectations defined in step 1 are reasonable, regular reference to these should prevent inappropriate resource commitments.

Flexibility

For units up to levels 3 or 4 of the framework, it is important to note one key advantage in option 2.

Many providers will wish to offer courses that include units belonging to different national standards bodies. There are serious resource and logistical problems if the units within a course require providers to participate in a number of different centrally directed moderation systems (as in option 1).

Option 2 gives providers the flexibility to design local systems that are suitable for delivering quality in the range of units they wish to offer.

STEP 5

Do arrangements now meet expectations?

In step 5 the national standards body considers two final questions:

Question 1

Does the linked quality process (shown in the diagram that follows) including external moderation now meet the expectations identified in step 1?

If the answer is NO, then step 4 should be revisited.

If the answer is YES, then move on to the second question.

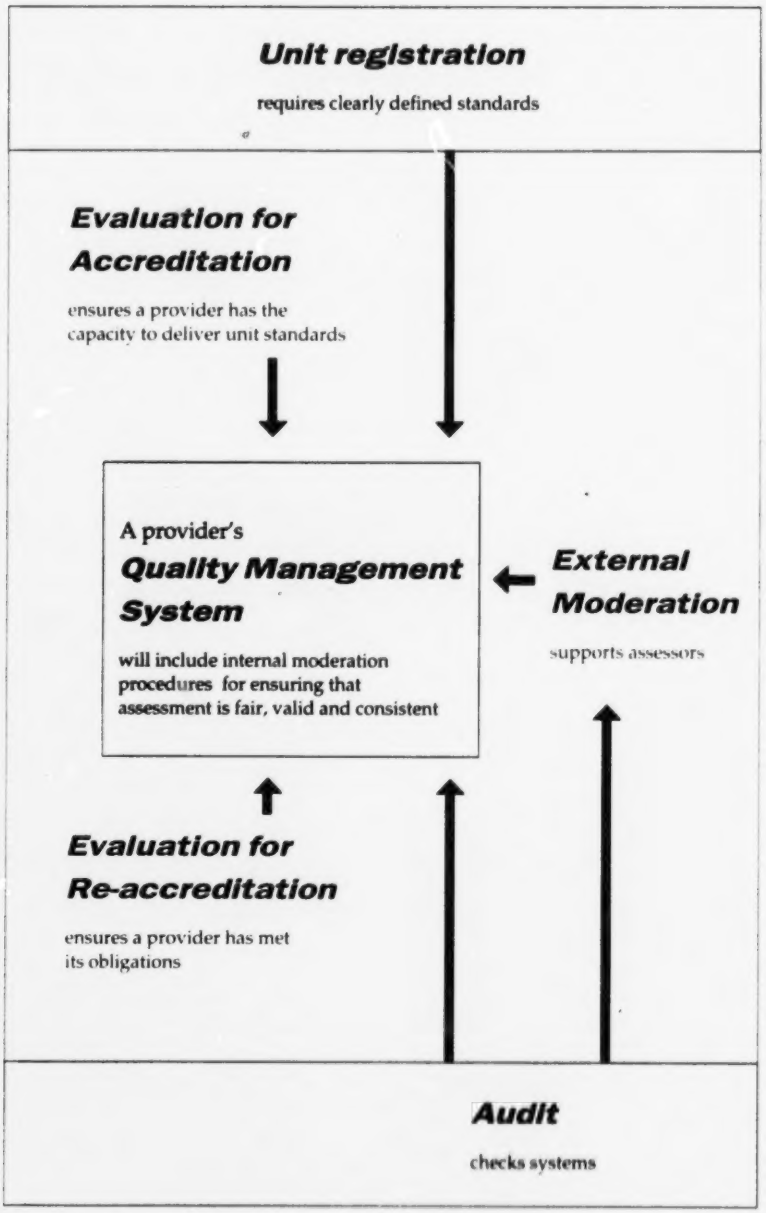
Question 2

Are the arrangements for ensuring the consistency of assessment with the required standards efficient, resource effective and accessible ?

This is the question the Qualifications Authority asks when it receives information on proposed moderation arrangements. This occurs at the time of unit registration.

If the answer to question two is YES, the moderation arrangements can be considered fit for purpose.

If the answer is NO, step 4 should be revisited.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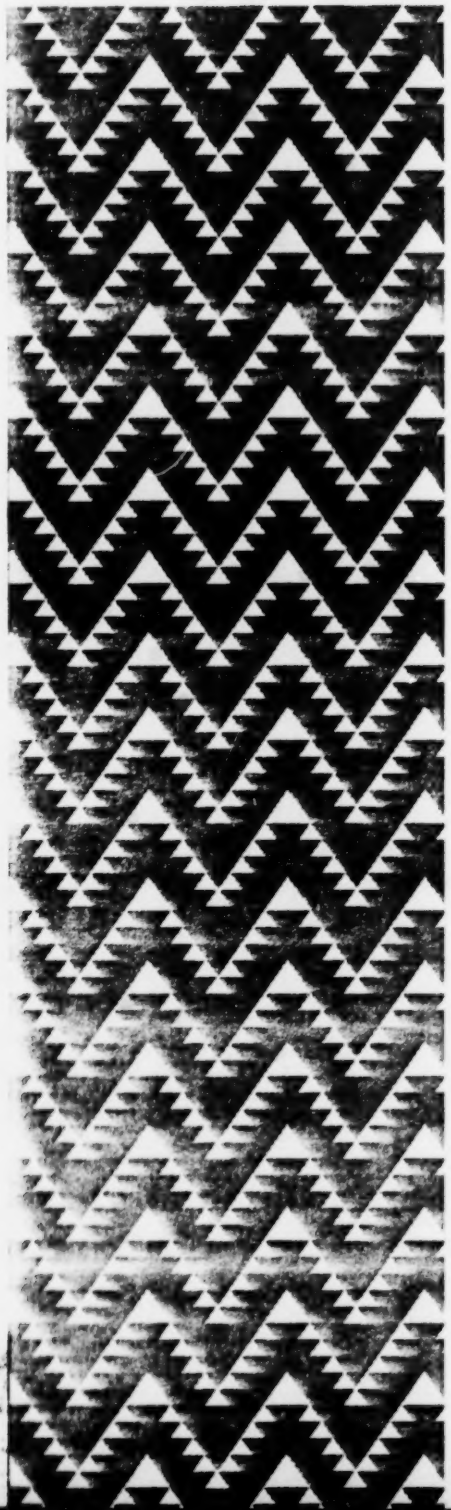
requires clearly defined standards
Evaluation for Accreditation
ensures a provider has the capacity to deliver unit standards
A provider's
Quality Management System
will include internal moderation procedures for ensuring that assessment is fair, valid and consistent
External Moderation
supports assessors
Evaluation for Re-accreditation
ensures a provider has met its obligations
Audit
checks systems

RELATED PUBLICATIONS



Assessment and moderation go hand in hand. A pre-requisite for dealing with the complexities that arise in setting up systems for the moderation of assessment is an understanding of the issues in and practice of standards-based assessment. These are introduced in a publication titled *Beyond the Norm?: An Introduction to Standards-based Assessment.*

Designing a Moderation System provides technical assistance to those who are given responsibility for designing moderation systems. It will be of interest to designers of external systems at the national or local level and designers of providers' internal moderation systems.

The two publications described here are available from:

The Sales Officer
The New Zealand Qualifications Authority
P O Box 160
Wellington

A further publication titled *Quality Management Systems for Nationally Registered Qualifications* is being produced. This will explain the concepts that link moderation of assessment to the overall quality process. It will highlight the importance of partnership.

A video on the moderation and assessment process will be available in February 1993.

APPENDIX ONE

MODERATION CRITERIA

The following are explanations of some of the moderation criteria presented for option 2 in step 4.

There will be external moderation arrangements

'External' means that assessments are open to the scrutiny of people from outside the provider or work-place where they are conducted. This is likely to involve any one or a combination of the following:

- assessors attending external meetings;
- an external person visiting assessors;
- exchanges of assessment material that do not involve face-to-face contact.

Locally based arrangements

These would involve providers who are located nearby each other.

Regionally based arrangements

This would usually involve all providers within particular geographical areas. Where this criterion is used a tagged explanation may be necessary.

Include user participation

A suitable representative from industry or whatever other appropriate user group will participate in moderation procedures.

Include a pre-planned programme

A plan will be provided at the time of accreditation and will be adhered to.

A flexible programme

Information on a predetermined plan will not be required at the time of accreditation.

The design of assessment activities

The panel or moderator will scrutinise the appropriateness of the design and content of assessment activities and any marking schedule before they are used.

During assessment activities

A moderator works alongside an assessor while assessment decisions are being made. (This is usually only possible if visiting moderators are used.)

Assessment decisions

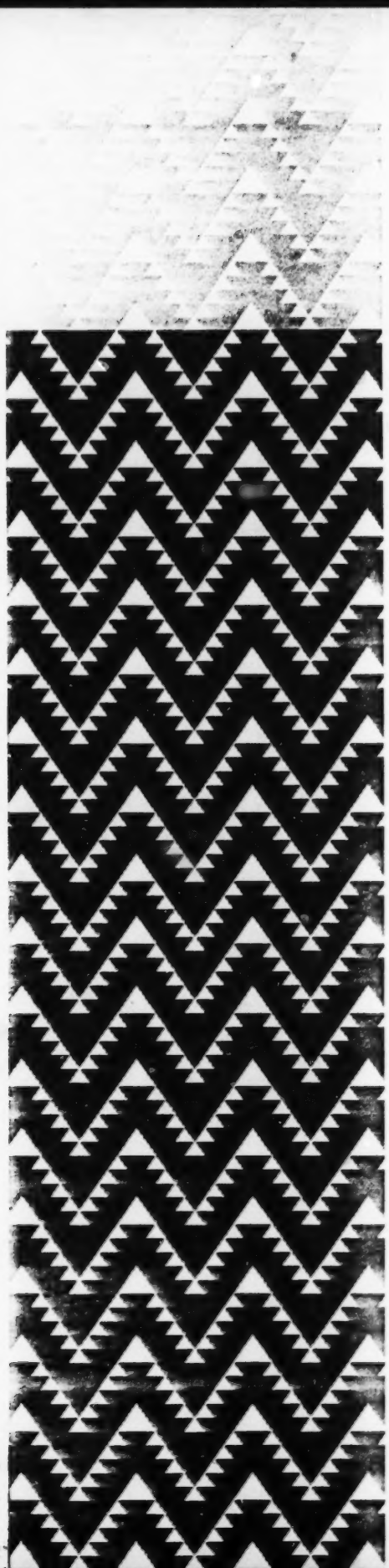
This will occur after assessment activities have taken place and will involve scrutinising the accuracy of assessment decisions that have been made about candidates' work.

APPENDIX TWO

GLOSSARY

- **Accreditation** (of providers) - a process for ensuring that providers have the capacity, including management of quality, to deliver unit standards.
- **Assessment** - a process of collecting and interpreting evidence of competence or achievement.
  - **Moderation of assessment** - *a process for ensuring the consistency of assessment with the required standard.*
  - **Performance criteria** - *statements of competence or achievement against which the attainment of outcomes is measured.*
  - **Standards-based assessment** - *assessment which is measured against unit standards.*
- **Certification** - documentary evidence that a qualification has been awarded.
- **Credit** (as applied to a unit standard) - a value assigned to a unit standard which reflects the relative time and effort required to complete its outcomes.
- **Credit Transfer** - a process of transferring credits between courses which lead to a nationally registered qualification.
- **Database of Student Records** - a database which contains details of units and qualifications completed by individuals.
- **Delivery** - teaching and learning approaches, context and content, resources, and range and number of assessments.
- **Domain** - a term describing a specific area of education or training at unit level, defined in the *NZQA Standard Classification for Units and Qualifications.*
- **Element/Outcome** - the competencies/achievements which must be demonstrated for successful completion of a unit.
- **Field** - a term describing a general area of education or training, corresponding to an *ISCED* field and defined in the *NZQA Standard Classification for Units and Qualifications* (see also **Sub-field** and **Domain**).
  - **Sub-field** - *a term describing a specific area of education or training at qualification level, corresponding to an ISCED sub-field and defined in the NZQA Standard Classification for Units and Qualifications.*
  - **Group Accreditation** - *accreditation of a provider to offer a number of units in a specified field, sub-field or domain up to a specified level.*

- **General Accreditation** - accreditation of a provider to offer all National Certificate and National Diploma units up to level 7 of the framework.
- **Group Accreditation** - accreditation of a provider to offer any number of units in a specified field, sub-field or domain up to a specified level.
- **Levels** - the eight levels of the framework are defined in terms of progressive stages of competence/achievement and complexity in units assigned to them.
- **Moderation of Assessment** - a process for ensuring the consistency of assessment with the required standard.
- **National Qualifications Framework** - collectively, all nationally registered qualifications and the nationally registered unit standards from which they are derived. Implicit is a defined and logical relationship between them.
- **National Standards Bodies** - represent all major user groups connected with a field, sub-field or domain (for example, health sciences) and have responsibility for the development, evaluation and endorsement of all units and qualifications in that category.
- **NZQA Standard Classification for Units and Qualifications** - a document which defines fields, sub-fields and domains, used for naming qualifications and unit standards, and for assistance in defining NSB and ITO fields, sub-fields or domains.
- **Outcome/Element** - the competencies/achievements which must be demonstrated for successful completion of a unit.
- **Performance Criteria** - statements against which the attainment of elements/outcomes is measured.
- **Provider** - an individual or organisation providing education or training.
- **Qualification** - a combination of unit standards which, when certificated, completes the *educational* prerequisite agreed by national standards bodies to be appropriate for entry to an occupation, or to a course at a higher level.
- **Quality Audit** - a process for ensuring the effective performance of a provider's overall systems for the management of quality; a function of the Authority.
- **Quality Management** - a process and structure implemented by a provider for ensuring that standards required by the Authority and national standards bodies are met; a prerequisite for accreditation.



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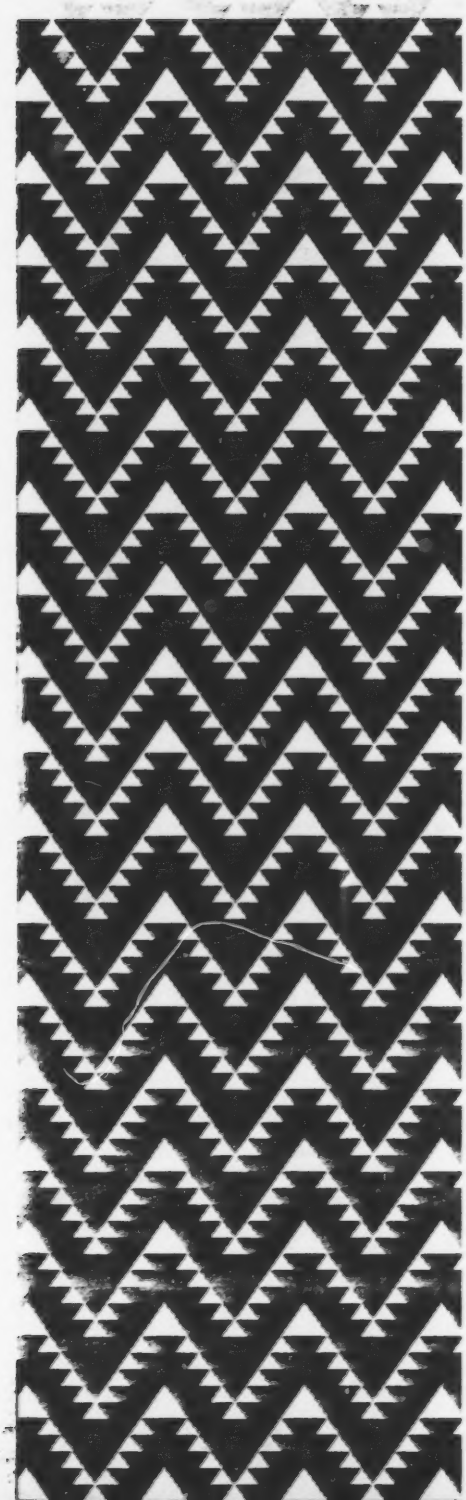
- **General Accreditation** - *accreditation of a provider to offer all National Certificate and National Diploma units up to level 7 of the framework.*
- **Unit Accreditation** - *accreditation of a provider to offer a specific unit or units.*
- **Moderation of Assessment** - *a process for ensuring the consistency of assessment with the required standard.*
- **Registration of Private Training Establishments** - *a process for ensuring that basic educational and consumer safeguards are in place.*
- **Registration of Units and Qualifications** - *a process for ensuring that units and qualifications have been evaluated and endorsed by national standards bodies as representing an exclusive national standard, and so registered with the Authority.*

- **Recognition of Prior Learning** - a process of awarding credits for outcomes which have not been certificated in terms of the National Qualifications Framework and may have been completed outside formal education and training.
  - **Credit Transfer** - *a process of transferring credits between courses which lead to a nationally registered qualification.*
- **Registration of Private Training Establishments** - a process for ensuring that basic educational and consumer safeguards are in place.
- **Registration of Units and Qualifications** - a process for ensuring that units and qualifications have been evaluated and endorsed by national standards bodies as representing an exclusive national standard, and so registered with the Authority.
- **Standards** - nationally registered statements of education and training outcomes and their associated performance criteria. See also Unit.
- **Standards-based Assessment** - assessment which is measured against unit standards.

- **Unit** - a unit has two parts:
  - *nationally evaluated and endorsed unit standards registered on the Authority's unit standard database*
  - *delivery details developed by a provider for teaching purposes.*
  - **Delivery** - *teaching and learning approaches, context and content, resources, and range and number of assessments.*
  - **Element/Outcome** - *the competencies/achievements which must be demonstrated for successful completion of a unit.*
  - **Unit Standards** - *nationally registered element/outcome statements and performance criteria, and administrative information.*
- **Unit Accreditation** - accreditation of a provider to offer a specific unit or units.
- **Unit Standards** - nationally registered element/outcome statements and performance criteria, and administrative information.
- **User Group** - all those who derive direct or indirect benefit from a qualification and its component units; generally includes students, qualified individuals, professional associations and employers who may be represented, along with providers, in national standards body.



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